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RAY FAULKNER

Art Education

THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ART EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The Teaching of Design

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Design — the organization of form, color, line, texture, and space — is basic in all art expressions and, accordingly, does and should play an important role in art teaching.

Because of its all-pervading nature, design is frequently treated as an abstract, generalized set of exercises, principles, or even laws in a manner which invites comparison with the academic teaching of grammar. One can survey the field of historical and contemporary art, consider the relative effectiveness of diversified art objects, list the apparent reasons for their effectiveness, and emerge with a series of design principles. Such analysis is invaluable, for it provides a large frame of reference to which individual problems or accomplishments can be related.

The great danger in this approach lies in the possibility of then assuming that the whole of art has been considered and the key to appreciation and creation found. This may result in courses planned with a series of abstract design problems—border illustrating rhythm, circular designs exemplifying radical balance, color plates showing related or contrasting hues or values. Generally, such exercises give little or no heed to materials and processes. The exercises either ignore completely or give a superficial nod to real human needs and are usually executed in wax crayon, water color, or cut paper. One is tempted to wonder if such educational prac-

tices are not in large part responsible for much of what one sees on our streets and in our stores—building facades with decoration unrelated to the use of the structure or the materials from which it was built; wooden bowls and clay plates whose surfaces have been bedeviled with stray sprigs of flowers, foliage, and fruit; glass tumblers, paper napkins, and a host of textiles displaying lifeless, meaningless forms. Could it be that our eagerness to have boys and girls in our schools cover paper with "designs," without real reason or need, leads to this?

This is not to imply that there is no place for the organized exploration of the formal aspects of art. Without design, expression is inchoate or chaotic; its impact is weakened if the forms and colors are disparate or put together insensitively. There is continuing need for giving attention to the kind and quality of design in painting, sculpture and modelling, architecture and city planning, handicrafts and industrial art, commercial art and photography. A great variety of art objects should be studied, compared, contrasted, and analyzed, for all persons profit from learning all that they can about the ways and means of making forms and colors pleasant and attractive. Such study inevitably leads to generalizations and principles which can be useful when new problems arise. But such study must be carried forward with full understanding of the fact that only one aspect of art is being considered, and every possible effort must be bent toward clarifying the integral

relationship of design to the problems of human needs and of materials. Otherwise it becomes an abstraction loaded with all of the dangers, as well as with all of the potentialities, of abstract exercises.

An example from the field of commercial art may clarify the above. If a poster telling of an exhibition of school art is to be made, what should the students consider? Primary in point of time and importance is that the poster is a means of **communicating an idea**; in this case, calling attention to the exhibit. That is its function and its only reason for existence (we shall not consider the matter of keeping children busy during the art period to be a reason). For thousands of years, man has worked at this problem; the student no longer needs start from scratch. Recently, art directors, psychologists, and business executives have made many careful studies of effective advertising.

They have added immensely to our understanding of the ways and means of attracting and holding attention, of the effectiveness of shapes and colors. They have not brought forth any rigid formulas, for the majority of studies have fortified the idea that result-getting advertising is based on thorough study of the specific situation. And from these studies one re-learns that novelty and surprise—creativity, if you will—is of first-rank importance. Still there is a range of information varying from the legibility of color combinations to more generalized principles of placement that is stimulating and useful. With such compiled experience available, it is unfair to ask the student to undertake an advertising problem as

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A Department of the N.E.A.

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though it had never been faced before. His problem is still an individual one demanding every gram of his creativity, but we must bear in mind that ignorance seldom stimulates creativity.

The questions of precisely what information should be given, as well

as when and how, cannot be answered in general terms, any more than can a formula for a successful poster be stated. Here, as always, the teacher must be sensitive to the individual and group needs of the class and decide such matters from first-hand knowledge. But the teacher should come to this problem with more than a sensitivity to color and balance.

Creating a poster is a real problem; communicating an idea, in organized manner, with certain materials. Principles of design should serve as a means to this end and should be used functionally. The design should grow from the idea and be shaped by the materials used. Certainly a design for a silkscreen poster will not be the same as one for cut paper, nor will a poster using only black and white be the same as one in full color. All of these factors contribute to the production of a poster which not only serves its immediate purpose of advertising an art show but fulfills its ultimate purpose of promoting individual development.

All too often, when boys and girls work on problems of this sort, the specific functions of the product are not clarified. The arrangement of forms and colors is stressed with little regard for the purpose of the object; the principles of design are held disproportionately important in evaluating the work; the psychological data from the field of advertising is not made available to the students; and the problem becomes primarily a task of producing a pleasing pattern of line and color. Only by a great leap of the imagination can it be called a problem in advertising. And only in a narrow, unrealistic sense does it contribute to the well-rounded development of the child.

House design offers an equally rewarding opportunity for student growth in sensitivity to design. We seek to develop the student's personality and character through encouraging him to exercise his creative and appreciative capacities in activities related to the design of houses. With good teaching, the student soon recognizes the need for knowing more about houses. He will want to know what contributes to pleasant family living, how a house is constructed, what kinds of homes people throughout this country and throughout the world have built, what contemporary trends and technological advances consist of and what they mean. He will feel the

need for ways of analyzing and appreciating the houses in his own neighborhood and the houses he designs. He can gain at least a basic familiarity with the problems of function, geography, and climate, structure, and esthetics as they relate to individual and community needs. He will learn that design is as important in domestic architecture as it is in painting. Let us hope, however, that he will realize that design is not merely the arrangement of shapes and colors pleasing to the eye, but that it is the organization of space with "sticks and stones" to facilitate good living. In this way, design becomes real and useful, integral with human needs and with materials, not just the breaking up of surfaces."

In summary, if the teaching of design fulfills its purposes fully and richly, it will be concerned with the design of something meaningful. It will be understood as a means, not as an end, and it will be specifically related to what is known about man's continuous effort to adapt natural and artificial materials to improve the conditions of his living.

The Mailbag

Sister M. Joanne, Catholic Art Association, Educational Chairman. ART EDUCATION, the journal of the National Art Education Association, goes to all members and is part of membership privileges. One may join through the regional art association, in your case Western Arts. Address Mr. Harold W. Hunsicker, Secretary, 1649 Elberon Ave., East Cleveland, Ohio. We are sending first two issues with our compliments.

Stanley Czurlis, Head, Art Education, State Teachers College, Buffalo, N. Y. Thank you for support you promise and which is already bearing fruits. Your letter to art teachers in Teachers Colleges of New York State is splendid evidence of your faith in N.A.E.A.

L. John G. Wenner, Teachers College of Connecticut, New Britain, Conn. Your interest in a State Organization is in line with N.A.E.A. program. Details need to be worked out. We are making haste slowly as the saying goes. Keep up the interest and keep us informed.

Lydia Fuller Largent, San Francisco, California. Yes, we have more copies of ART EDUCATION if you need them. Pacific Arts does sound interesting. A story for September issue would help.

Editorial Comment

Firm Foundations

The Atlantic City meeting of the National Art Education Association has been hailed a success by leaders in the field, many who could not be on hand and those fortunate enough to be there. The conveners represented all sections of the country, all regional groups and all segments of the profession. This fact alone is a remarkable accomplishment.

However, much more happened at the shore. A new Constitution and By-laws was presented, debated, amended and approved at the first business meeting, thus laying the foundations upon which subsequent action could be based. That Constitution was published in the last issue of ART EDUCATION.

The chief virtues of the document are its democratic spirit, its flexible provisions and its inclusiveness. Perhaps in proper perspective one may also see its weaknesses.

Weaknesses are a natural part of any plan; infallibility is not the claim of humans. Therefore, as time goes on and needs arise, changes can and will be made within the latitudinous framework of the present document.

A national society such as the N.A.E.A. should have broad outlooks; that is one of the salient features of the present re-organization. The Policy and Research Commission created by the Constitution is an extremely important body, which, although lacking in executive powers, is nevertheless the group that should give the Association its true character, namely that of a research body, concerned with fundamental problems and broad directives for American art education. The personnel of that Commission is such as to assure art educators of sound and far-reaching policies and studies.

Firm foundations were laid at Atlantic City. They incorporated and interpreted the Cincinnati Proposals which were the result of much thinking, debate and questioning.

Cleveland is next. While the program there is a one day meeting, its deliberations and reports should be of utmost significance. It should serve as a clearing house for members of the Association and others who are vitally concerned but could not attend the Atlantic City meetings.

Joseph K. Boltz Passes

Joseph K. Boltz, affectionately known as "Joe" to a vast number of teachers and supervisors of art, and particularly in the Western Arts area, passed away last month.

Mr. Boltz was keenly interested in the development of N.A.E.A., was a member of the Policy and Research Committee, and Chairman of the Board of Western Arts. His leadership over a period of years was highly appreciated. His premature death came as a complete shock.

The Officers and Council of the National Art Education Association hereby expresses their deep sympathy to relatives and associates of Joseph Boltz and record his name among those who gave unstintingly of time and energy to the cause of art education in America.

National Interest

Dmitri Dejanikus, Chief, Editorial Service for Time Magazine, calls the attention of teachers and supervisors of art to the May 31 issue in which a fairly comprehensive and very interestingly written story on Augustus John.

Z. A. D. is the Federal Security Agency's organ (Office of Education). It means "Zeal for American Democracy" and represents an interesting project that may have suggestions for art teachers everywhere.

A National Honor Society for High School art students based on the National Thespian Society Honor Point system was recently organized at Benton Harbor, Michigan. L. Margzreta Frederickson, adviser, is willing to share her plans with high school people who may be interested.

Elizabeth Wells Robertson, Director of Art in the Chicago Public Schools, has retired after a long and distinguished career in the field of art education. Born and educated in Chicago, Miss Robertson served the Chicago school system for 37 years, for the past 14 as Director of Art. The new philosophy of art which she developed in her city has given happy and vivid experiences to innumerable boys and girls and has gained world-wide recognition for the art program of the schools.

Miss Robertson served as President of Art Education of the N.E.A., as National Chairman of the P.T.A., as American Correspondent for "Athene," the official organ of the New Society of Art Teachers of Eng-

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Strictly Business

The Cleveland Meeting
Monday, July 5, 1948

THE PROGRAM

Morning Session

8:30—Council Meeting—Board of Education Building.

10:00—Careers in Art—Lecture Room, Public Library. **Presiding:** Miss Sara Joyner, V.P. of the Association. Mr. Otto F. Ege, Dean, Cleveland School of Art.

10:45—Recent Developments in Visual Aids—Mr. Leslie E. Frye, Director, Division of Visual Education, Cleveland.

11:30—Business Meeting—**Presiding:** Dr. Edwin Ziegfeld, President.

Afternoon Session

1:00—Luncheon Meeting—Hotel Cleveland. **Presiding:** Dr. Edwin Ziegfeld, President of the Association. The 1947 Story of American Youth (Illustrated) Miss Mary Adeline McKibbin, Chairman, International Art Project.

3:00—Unescos' Activities in Art and Art Education—Lecture Room, Public Library. **Presiding:** Mr. Alfred Howell, Director, Art Education, Cleveland. Dr. Thomas Munro, Curator of Education, Cleveland Museum of Art.

4:00—The Functions of the Museum in the Community—Mr. Charles Val Cler, Director, Akron Art Institute.

Progress Report

Policy and Research Committee
Ray Faulkner, Chairman

Statements of policy for the N.A.E.A. have now been received from almost all of the committee members and provide a wealth of material from which to develop an official report. In general, the statements agree on all major issues. The form, however, is markedly different in each one which poses quite a problem for the chairman. In the near future, a draft will be sent for your approval.

The questionnaire developed by Joseph Boltz was to have been distributed at the Western Arts Association Convention. Thus far the chairman has had no report on its administration. It was distributed at the Pacific Arts Association Convention and a few replies are coming in. When enough returns have been received to get adequate coverage, the results should provide the

committee with a good basis for planning future work.

It has been recommended that Professor Clara MacGowan-Cioban be invited to join the Policy and Research Committee because of her interest in the problems of art education, especially in teacher qualifications.

Orchids to Related Arts

The Related Arts Service deserves the high commendation and sincere thanks of the art teachers of America for the boldness with which they have endorsed N.A.E.A. Often, lip service is lent to one cause or another with the assurance that no harm is done one way or the other. But Related Arts have not only come out unequivocally for the National Association, but have dug deep in their resources by devoting two bulletins to the cause, by allotting the larger part of its April meeting to a discussion of N.A.E.A., and by urging its most important constituents to become Supporting Members. That's not just lip service; it is solid, material evidence of the strong belief in the cause of art education and its organization on a national scale.

National Interest

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land, and as Consultant in Inter-Cultural Relations under Nelson Rockefeller, Co-ordinator of Inter-American Affairs. At the invitation of the World Federation of Education, Miss Robertson was sent to Cuba with an art exhibition from the Chicago Public Schools. She was instrumental in the establishment of the Chicago Public School Art Society Scholarship Fund which enables many gifted children to continue their education in art.

After a pleasant vacation in Florida, Miss Robertson plans to continue her interests in the art world. Miss Robertson was honored by the Chicago Art Educators Association at the last regular meeting of the group on January 24th. Over 700 teachers, principals and their friends gathered together to bid Miss Robertson farewell, upon her retirement.

Pan American Union Issues Booklet on Argentine Painter

Emilio Pettoruti, noted Argentine abstractionist painter, is the title and subject of the third in a series of booklets on contemporary artists of Latin America published by the Pan American Union. This first bilingual monograph contains a comprehensive and up-to-date survey of

the artist's life and works. Compiled by the Pan American Union's Division of Intellectual Cooperation, the 29-page pamphlet carries a representative selection of 17 striking reproductions in black and white. It also includes a biographical summary and partial bibliography.

Delmar L. Kroehler, President of the Kroehler Manufacturing Company, has been elected Chairman of the Manufacturers' Advisory Committee of the Museum Design Project, according to an announcement made today by Harry Fish, President of the Project. The Committee will aid in the selection of manufacturers who will develop the furniture from the designs chosen in the International Competition for Low-cost Furniture Design, now in progress, and will prepare for the Museum of Modern Art a list of suggestions and comments for the use of the competing research teams and designers.

Mr. Kroehler was given authority by the Project to select members of his Committee from the leaders in the industry.

Briefs on Books

• **Making a Water Colour**, by George Pearse Ennis. The Studio Publications Inc., New York, 1947. \$4.50.

Here is one of the most popular publications in the important "How to Do It" series. This volume, is now in its sixth impression. Although written work cannot take the place of direct personal instruction one may obviously conclude that it is "the next best thing to personal tuition by masters".

The late Mr. Ennis, an important water colorist, literally records his personal approach to the medium, namely: a straight-forward technique designed to secure rapid impressions. The author maintains a consistent attitude by recording in thirty-six pages every requisite for the student water colorist. The very

direct textual statements include: sketching, color palette, brushes, sundry containers, papers and their stretching, planning the composition, methods of holding the brush, and various stages in the creation of a water color, concluding with a method for presenting or exhibiting water colors. Numerous photographs visualize the written words.

Part two of the volume is devoted to an analysis of sixteen full-color reproductions. The commentary exposes the student to the myriad methods of rendering in water color.

The terse words of a great teacher and painter of water color provide a rich beginning for the student. While there is no reference to the many present-day approaches to the medium, the somewhat dogmatic nature of the writing favors the beginning student. There is no confusion; no suggestion of tricks. It is water color, per se.

• **The Children's Art Book**, by Geoffrey Holme. The Studio Publications, Inc., 381 4th Ave., New York 16, N. Y. 1946, \$3.50, 96 pp. The editor of *The Studio*, an educator who has exerted a powerful influence upon British art and art education, presents in this book a philosophy of appreciation. His thesis is sound as well as challenging. A child, he argues, as well as an adult, begins with the known and proceeds to the unknown.

This is not just a collection of pictures. A story runs through the entire book. As the child meets his pets: dogs, cats and others, he does so through fine drawings and paintings by old and recent masters. He thus learns to appreciate fine art through exposure and acquaintance. Eminent artists reproduced include: Edmund DuLac, Keith Henderson, Rubens, Gibbings, Beirei, Durer, So-sen, Hokusai, Shinsui, Brangwin Skeaping, Dame Laura Knight, Audubon, Mark Severin, Bateman, Lorraine, Avercamp, and Repin.

H. F. HEILMAN,
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